

During her 14 years in the North Carolina Legislature and eight more years as lieutenant governor, Perdue focused on creating 21st century jobs and improving public health, but she also was able to champion her pet cause: education.

She then campaigned for governor on a platform of health care and education. Taking office during the worst economic downturn since the 1930s, Gov. Perdue understandably has made North Carolina's economy and jobs creation her first priorities. Drawing on her experience as a former teacher and her studies at UF, she also is working to transform North Carolina classrooms through increased technology and a statewide online school initiative.

The governor this summer announced North Carolina's selection as one of the winners of a federal Race to the Top grant, worth about \$400 million, to advance efforts in statewide education reform. She calls her education agenda "Career and College: Ready, Set, Go!", which includes preparing every student to graduate from high school ready for a career, college or technical training.

Perdue says she hopes to share the goals of "Ready, Set, Go" with the Southern Regional Education Board, for which she was recently elected chair. The 80-member board has 16 member states, including North Carolina, Florida and Virginia—all places that she has called home.

In nominating Perdue for the University of Florida honor, William C. Harrison, chairman of North Carolina's state board of education, wrote that university "should be proud that one of your education graduates has accomplished so much at a time when investment in education is critical."